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Pathways Transitions

PATHWAYS TRANSITIONS

By Rev. Sarah Kim, Th.D.



Transitions are an inevitable aspect of life, and they bring mixed feelings in letting go of what has been, in the anticipation of what is to come. I am most grateful for having had the opportunity to serve our conference with Rev. Kathy Clark in light of her exceptional leadership and most kind personality. I'm saddened to see her go, but I'm ecstatic to see her venturing into a new world of ministry and leadership in the national UCC setting, which is not so far from where we are.

With this transition, I have taken the executive position in leading PATHWAYS Theological Education. PATHWAYS, stemming from the success of our own home-grown Theology Among the People (TAP) program, owes much to Rev. Clark's efforts in developing an excellent theological educational program for both lay and authorized leaders in the Southeast Conference. Though PATHWAYS is in its fledgling stages of



Conference. Though PATHWAYS is in its fledgling stages of development, our partners—Lancaster Seminary and the Center for Progressive Renewal—along with the support of the Southeast Conference Board and PATHWAYS Advisory Committee, are working diligently to provide an affordable and accessible theological education for all interested participants seeking personal growth, spiritual formation, and preparation for lay and authorized leadership in the parish.

I'm happy to announce that starting August 1, 2012, Ms. Laura Arnold will serve as part-time support staff as the new Associate Minister for Theological Education. Originally from central Illinois, Ms. Arnold is a graduate of Candler School of Theology (2010) with a concentration in spiritual formation and

religious education. She has a passion for parish and educational ministry, and expresses enthusiasm for joining the staff of PATHWAYS ministry, which she sees as "living out the commitment that theological education is not merely an information gathering process but rather a transformative path upon which the future of our Church stands."

Thank you for your continued prayer and support for the ministries of the Southeast Conference.

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Local Church News - August 2012



SEC Youth at 2012 NYE



Brittany Myers, member of First Congregational UCC, Birmingham, shares her experience at the 2012 National Youth Event.

When I found out that the National Youth Event was happening this summer, I was so excited to go back; I remembered all the fun I had when I went when I was 12 and 16 years old, and I could not wait to go. Then I found out I was too old to be considered a youth and unable to attend as a chaperone, but luckily a new pilot group called Mentors In Training Team (MITT) was created. MITT is designed for 19- and 20-

year-olds who are making the transition in the church from being youth to adults. MITT was my ticket to the National Youth Event, and I could not have been more thrilled.

While I was there, I helped those who were doing service projects get with their correct groups and on the right bus to their destination. I also had the opportunity to help with the carnival that took place on the last day. In doing these things I was able to meet new people from all over the United States. I had the wonderful opportunity to dance during Communion while four people told stories about fish and loaves. I thoroughly enjoyed every speaker and the band! Each speaker carried a different inspirational message that always left me thinking. The band...awesome! Words cannot express how I much I loved to hear them. I would have to say this past National Youth Event was my favorite. I really enjoyed being a part of the MITT program and meeting new people and forming bonds with them.

Church of the Savior, UCC in Knoxville, TN, has recently become the home for Interfaith Worker Justice of East TN (IWJET). This is one step COS is taking to bring greater focus to their efforts in the area of economic justice. COS has been working with IWJET for quite a while on a variety of issues ranging from supporting immigrant workers seeking to be unionized in a chicken processing plant in Morristown, TN; to standing with local school janitors whose jobs were going to be outsourced; to public actions to



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[Extravagant welcome at Massachusetts UCC now showering visitors on mission trips](#)

Weary travelers on mission trips in the Massachusetts area have always been welcome at Wollaston Congregational Church, UCC, in Quincy. But this summer, a stop at the 100-year-old Parish House has been made a lot more welcoming, with the addition of shower facilities.

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school janitors whose jobs were going to be outsourced, to public actions to bring awareness to safety issues resulting in fatalities on a Knoxville bridge project (that was given to the lowest bidder). IWJET and Jobs with Justice have been remarkably effective in their area over the years and COS is hoping this step will help to increase involvement of local communities of faith in these efforts.

Click on this link <http://www.etiwj.org/> to see the new website for Interfaith Worker Justice of East TN. Click on the various tabs to get a good look at all the recent activities of IWJ, along with several union allies.

Bennie Liggins, pastor of **Unity UCC in Montgomery, AL**, sent us an update and pictures of the church's Summer Feeding Program.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 21 and verse 17, we find these words: ¹⁷ *Jesus asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked him three times if he loved him. So he told Jesus, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you." Jesus replied, "Feed my sheep."*

The congregation at Unity could not decide what Christ meant by "feed my sheep." Did He mean feed them physically, spiritually, or intellectually? Since we could not say for certain we decided to do all three.

Thanks to the donations and hard work of some very generous people, we have been able to answer the call of Christ through two very special ministries:

THE SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM:

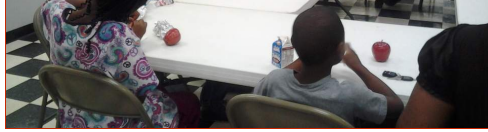
1. **Monday- Friday, from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. We serve a free nutritious lunch to over thirty children and disabled people. As good as this sounds, we have a goal and the capacity to feed one hundred people a day.**

UNITY ACADEMY:

1. **This Saturday morning (9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) ministry provides free tutoring to children in grades one through nine. We also help those high school students who are having difficulty passing the Alabama High School exit exam and we feed each student breakfast and a snack. The need for this program has been manifested by our ministering to over 80 students each Saturday. The success of the program has caused us to close registration and begin a waiting list.**

The Lord has truly blessed this little part of His kingdom in Montgomery, and we continue to ask for your prayers, blessings, and support.





Work Camp on the Mountain

Pleasant Hill (TN) Community United Church of Christ partnering with Uplands Village, a continuum-care community and Neighbors Together hosted a work camp consisting of 12 youth and 3 adults from BEM Church, St. John's UCC, near Owensville, MO.

Neighbors Together, a grass-roots organization on the Cumberland Plateau, initiated the work camp for the purpose of preparing an old house loaned to Pleasant Hill CUCC by Uplands Village to be used as the Neighbors Together office and food pantry. The youth painted the food pantry room and basement at the house and helped move the food pantry, a job that would have taken the committee much longer.

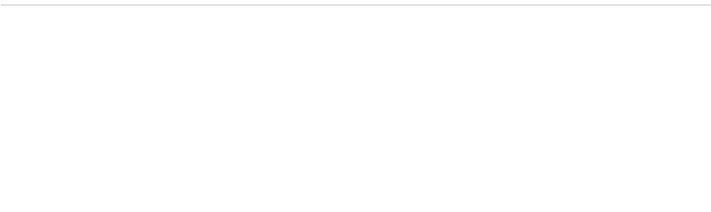
"PHCC has faithfully and generously supported Neighbors Together's food pantry efforts ever since its beginning in 2002 and was pleased to be a work camp partner," stated Pastor Tom Warren. The youth of PHCUCC were present during Bible School and worked each evening with the Bible School children helping with games and crafts. The GRAB Thrift Shop, a local mission of PHCUCC, provided yet another opportunity to experience life on the "mountain."

Dave Harsh, development director of Uplands Village, arranged for the youth to work with assisted living residents and around the grounds of the assisted living facility, Fletcher House. Tom Warren and Barb Everett included the youth in the Tuesday afternoon worship services at Wharton Homes, the nursing home facility of Uplands.

We feel that the partnering of Neighbors Together, Pleasant Hill CUCC, and Uplands Village provided an experience that will long be remembered by

Uplands village provided an experience that will long be remembered by those who participated. God was definitely still speaking (and acting) here in Pleasant Hill.

The work camp committee consisted of: Al and Jackie Dwenger, Jack and Fanny Seville, Ziggy Stampfl, Tom Warren, Dave Harsh, Mandy Adams, and Bob and Connie Waidmann.



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Lifting Up... August 2012

We wish a full and speedy recovery for Rev. Leslie Etheredge, Associate Pastor of Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville, TN, as she recovers from a recent surgery.

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Feature Focus - August 2012



I recently came across the following vignette in a novel called *Cutting for Stone* (which I recommend) by physician/author Abraham Verghese. The dialogue is between a young man and an older woman who is part of the community that helped to raise him. It is for me an eloquent description of cultivating and discerning one's call or vocation in life.

I chose the specialty of surgery because of Matron, that steady presence during my boyhood and adolescence. "What is the hardest thing that you can possibly do?" she said when I went to her for advice on the darkest day of the first half of my life.

I squirmed. How easily Matron probed the gap between ambition and expediency. "Why must I do what is hardest?" "Because, Marion, you are an instrument of God. Don't leave the instrument sitting in its case, my son. Play! Leave no part of your instrument unexplored. Why settle for 'Three Blind Mice' when you can play the 'Gloria'?" How unfair of Matron to invoke that soaring chorale which always made me feel that I stood with every mortal creature looking up to the heavens in dumb wonder. She understood my unformed character. "But, Matron, I can't dream of playing Bach, the 'Gloria' ...," I said under my breath. I'd never played a string or wind instrument. I couldn't read music. "No, Marion," she said, her gaze soft, reaching for me, her gnarled hands rough on my cheek. "No. Not Bach's 'Gloria.' Yours! Your 'Gloria' lives within you. The greatest sin is not finding it, ignoring what God made possible in you."... Surgery was the most difficult thing I could imagine. And so I became a surgeon.

In my time of ministry with you in the Southeast Conference I have both spoken about and witnessed how God calls each of us in our lives – to vocation, to relationship, to ministry, to ways of being God's instruments in this world. As part of a "reformed and reforming" tradition, the notion of the "priesthood of all believers" has been made evident and been reinforced. This has been especially true in the Theology Among the People (TAP) program and in our Global Theological Education experiences, where I have had the privilege of being with believers on the journey as they have discerned a deep stirring within them that has led to transformation. It has been a precious blessing to be with individuals and groups as they have become attuned to the unique "Gloria" that lives within each one of them and us.



Indeed, each of us is an instrument of God and each of us is called to leave no part of our instrument



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Our instrument unexplored. We experience God's call in so many myriad ways and at different times and circumstances in our lives. That call may be to singlehood or partnered life; to parenthood or another form of generativity; to a particular vocation or change in vocation; to ministry in the

church and in the world. At this time in my life, I believe that God is calling me to minister in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ in the national setting of our beloved denomination as the Minister for Members in Discernment on the Ministry Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA) team of Local Church Ministries. In my new position, I will be charged with "cultivating a culture of call" within the UCC. That, my friends, is a daunting job description! Thank goodness I do not have to do this alone, for it is a vocation all of us share as followers of Christ and members of his church. We are called together to help each individual and community discover and be equipped to sing its own "Gloria," in different voices and styles that, in God's harmonious way, move beyond cacophony to one great chorus of diverse and beautiful voices.

The idea that we are all called to ministry can easily take on the significance (or lack thereof) of a well-worn cliché, evoking the background noise of elevator music rather than a great sacred chorale or a deeply evocative spiritual. As instruments of God's activity in the world, we are charged to step out of our cases and to practice the music of life that calls us all to be the beloved community. If our ministries, both individual and shared, do not bring glory to God, then we have fallen short of fulfilling what God has made possible in us.

In this time of transition, in our conference and in the life of the church, may we be attuned to God's call to each of us and to all of us. May we find the "Gloria" within and play and sing it out faithfully and fully. Whether gathered or scattered, may we not lose touch with the sacred hum of the universe which emanates from our Creator. May we sing together, each in our own unique voice, "*Gloria in excelsis deo!*" Glory to God in the highest! Amen and amen.

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Conference News - August 2012



After two months of reconfiguration of the office spaces, the Conference staff have returned to their rightful places.

Tim Downs returns from a well-earned vacation on August 6.

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Celebrations - August 2012



You are cordially invited to a celebration for Rev. Kathy Clark, Associate Conference Minister, as she leaves the Southeast Conference for a position with the MESA Team of the Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ, Cleveland, OH. Churches or individuals must RSVP the number of attendees to Gerri Ryons-Hudson at 404-607-1993 ext. 0 or ghudson@secucc.org . no later than August 20, 2012.



Rev. Bruce Shoup, member of Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC, Pleasant Hill, TN, and son of Revs. Ann and Hal Shoup, has been offered the position of Chaplain for Haigazian University. Haigazian University is a downtown university located in Lebanon with no resident students. It was founded by the Armenian Community in the 1950s, has a relationship with the UCC, and today includes many Arabs among its student body. We offer Bruce our congratulations for his new call.